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Shortgrass Country

by Monte Noelke

Cool summer weather has been perfect to fatten the late labs and put a bloom on the nursing calves. Lots of Shortgrass Country has had rains and the close calls of the dry spring are all but forgotten.

Cattle prices have been sounding good, which isn't always the case. Sometimes herders find a big gap in what they've heard their stock was worth and what happens at the pay-off window.

Many a long faced hombre, with his bifocals drooping down his nose and his shirt-tail out in front and back, has rolled off an auction parking lot wishing to swap for a filling station job or that he could trade places with the old boy sitting on the checkout stool in a backroad grocery store. And all this sadness was because he'd left the ranch that morning pulling a gooseneck of pure gold that'd taken on a deep film of tarnish after they'd been checked in at the gate.

Before the bunkhouse burned down two or three years ago, I'd planned on moving the TV set from there into my kitchen to watch the morning market news. But after the fire burned up the set and melted the aerial to the ground, I decided to wait for the cable to come out here. I have two

neighbors who are big TV fans. One lives seven miles to the southwest and the other one lives eight miles to the northeast, so if they ran a cable through these parts, I'd be in a favored spot.

Probably the best way to bring the market report to the ranch is to have a friend tape the morning program and then every month or so sit down in front of a VCR and catch up on the action. With a setup like that, a guy could do a little speculating now and then. But I guess about the time I was in business, they'd decide to install the cable.